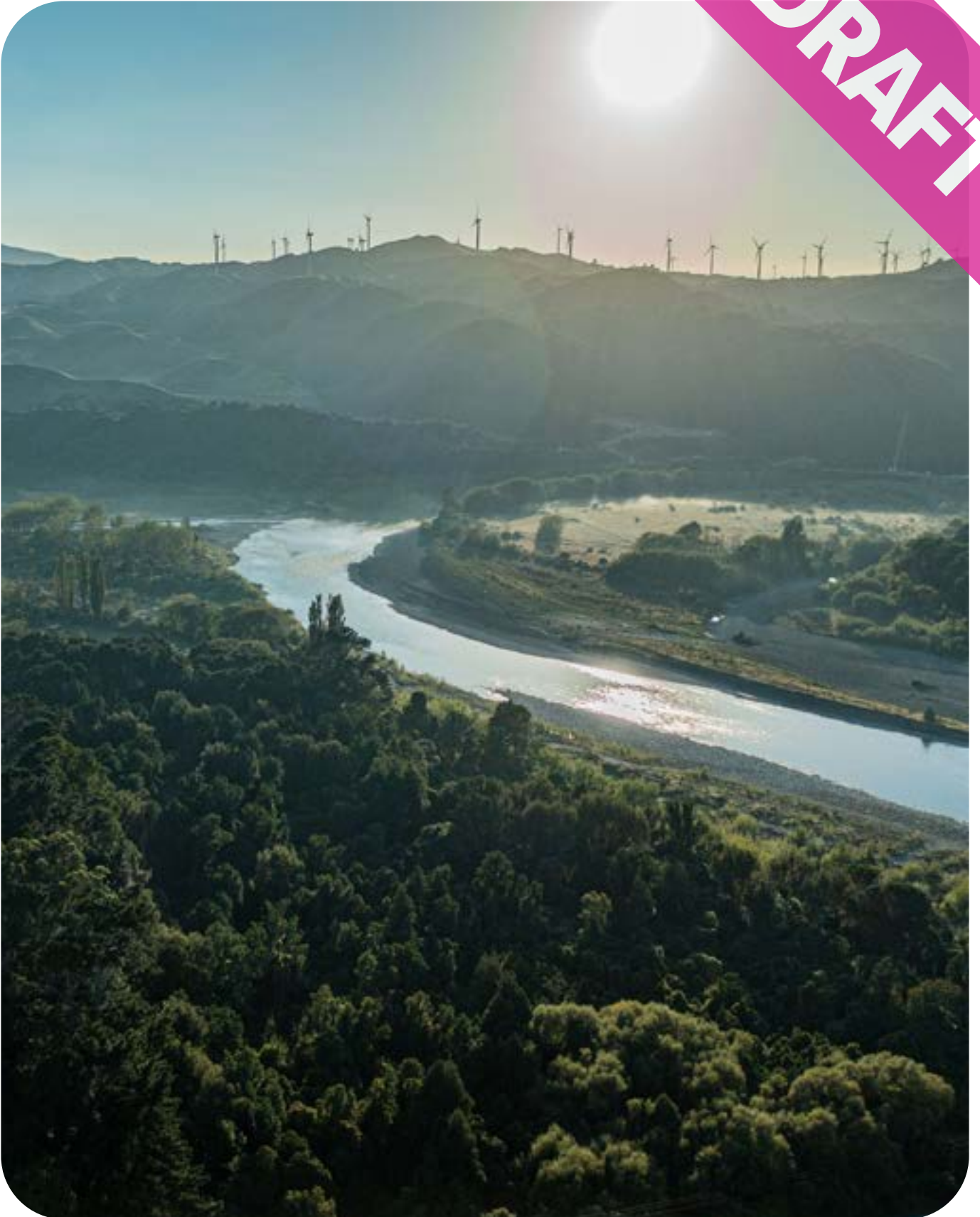


**DRAFT**



**Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain**  
Draft Reserve Management Plan  
2024







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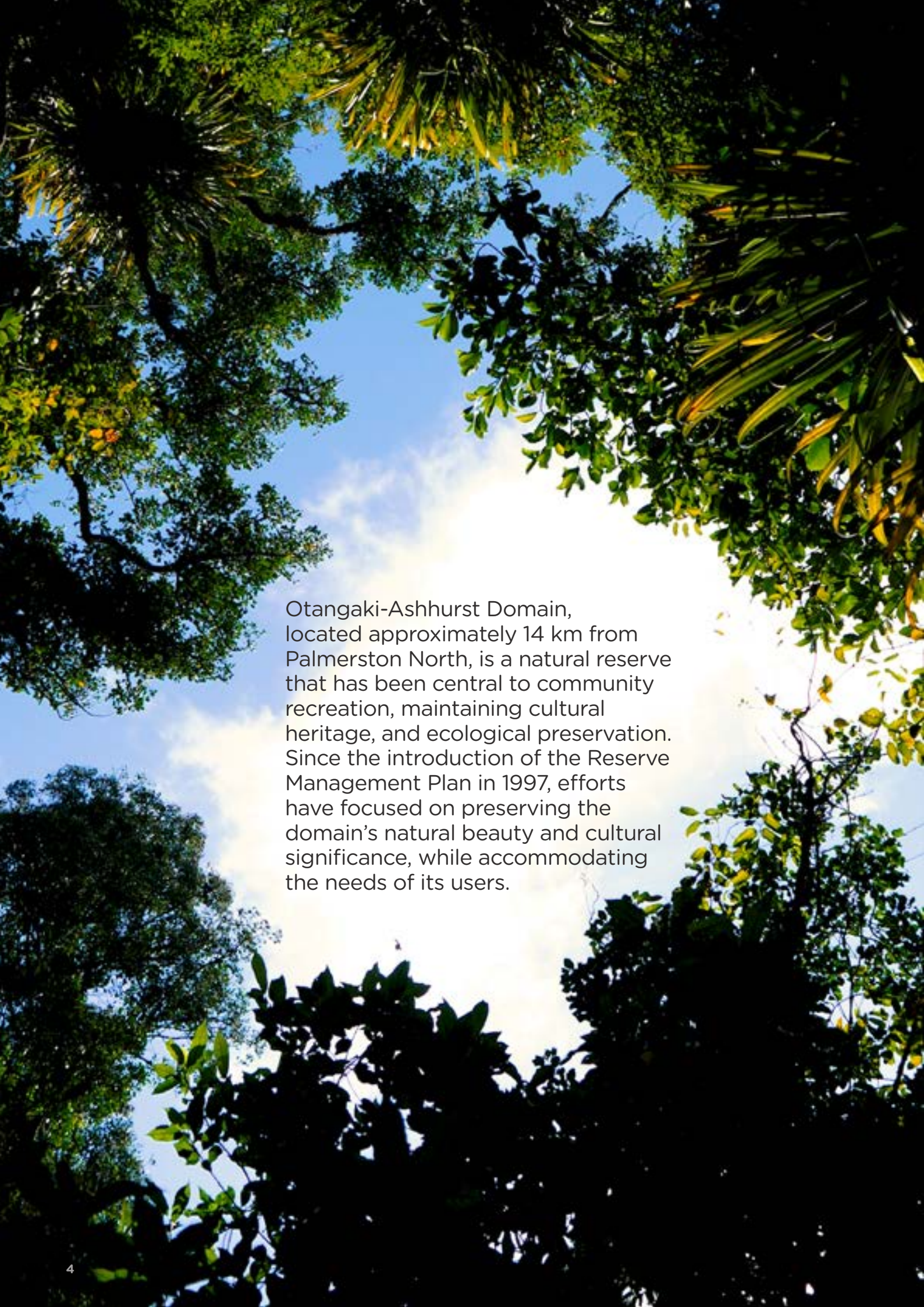
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Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, located approximately 14 km from Palmerston North, is a natural reserve that has been central to community recreation, maintaining cultural heritage, and ecological preservation. Since the introduction of the Reserve Management Plan in 1997, efforts have focused on preserving the domain's natural beauty and cultural significance, while accommodating the needs of its users.

# User Guide

## how to use this plan

This Reserve Management Plan is a review of the Ashhurst Domain: Development and Management Plan (August 1997). This update is designed to ensure the continued use and enjoyment of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain while guiding its sustainable management, protection, and enhancement.

The primary purpose of this plan is to set out objectives and policies that balance conservation, cultural respect, and recreational use, ensuring the preservation of natural and cultural values while allowing public enjoyment and access.

This plan has been prepared by Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) as the administering body for the reserve, with input from Rangitāne o Manawatū. The plan should be used alongside the Palmerston North City: Reserve Management Plan General Policy<sup>1</sup> (the General Policy). The General Policy outlines the Council's responsibilities for reserve management within the national legislative framework, local city planning, and the general objectives and policies that apply across all reserves in Palmerston North.

## Sections

This Reserve Management Plan (RMP) is structured under four sections:

- 1. Identity**  
Overview of the Domain's identity, including historical, cultural, ecological, and landscape aspects, planning framework, physical assets, and community interactions.
- 2. Values and Objectives**  
Describes the values, tikanga, and management objectives for the reserve.
- 3. Management Policies**  
Details the specific management approaches for various areas within the reserve.
- 4. Development and Integration Opportunities**  
Discusses future opportunities for development and integration, particularly concerning larger regional projects.

## Term of the Plan

This plan was first produced in 1997. This review of the management plan will be the new active plan for a term of up to 10 years following the date of its adoption. The Council will keep the plan under continuous review so that the plan is adapted to changing circumstances or in accordance with increased knowledge. If changes are required within the 10-year term of the plan to ensure that plan remains relevant and accurate, and the changes do not involve a comprehensive review, the Council will make these changes without seeking public input.

At the end of the 10-year period that plan will be reviewed in accordance with the provisions of Section 41(8) of the Reserves Act 1977.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing the draft Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain RMP, the drafting of the Reserve Management Plan General Policy had not commenced.

# Section 1 Identity



# Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain: overview of the reserve

Te Āpiti, also referred to as the Manawatū Gorge, is of paramount importance to Rangitāne o Manawatū (Rangitāne). Crucially, it connected iwi, hapū and whānau groups east and west of Te Āpiti. The river, riparian margins and Te Ahu a Turanga track were significant routes of transport and communication passageways, and the meeting place of the two great forests of Whātonga; forests of the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges. The area is thus symbolic of connectivity between people, places and environments. Te Āpiti has many meanings including a split or cleft, to place side by side, or to have two of. It represents the two sides of the Gorge.

The Upper Terrace of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain boasts expansive views of the main access point into the Manawatū from the East Coast. This area was the obvious choice for the original Pā site: Otangaki. Otangaki was established as a Rangitāne Pā. The area later became one of the earliest locations settled by colonial migrants in the region for timber milling and farming (pre-dating Palmerston North). Despite migrancy, the Pā remained a significant gathering place for Māori, commemorating its status as a marae.

With the development of farming and deforestation in Manawatū, there are now few remnants of old forests and biodiversity of that time. In consideration of this, the area became protected by legislation in 1885. Legislative measures continue to protect this site, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, located approximately 14 km from Palmerston North, is a natural reserve that has been central to community recreation, maintaining cultural heritage, and ecological preservation. Since the introduction of the RMP in 1997, efforts have focused on preserving the domain's natural beauty and cultural significance, while accommodating the needs of its users.

Over the years, Ashhurst Domain has become a well-loved reserve featuring expansive parklands, lush native forests, and scenic river views. Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain's historical significance, wāhi tapu and natural beauty continue to make it a cherished space and recreational hub for Rangitāne, residents and visitors alike.

The final version of this plan will include a brief overview of the site's military and racecourse history.



Figure 1: Ashhurst and Palmerston North

# Natural and Cultural Landscape

## Landscape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment informed the first Ashhurst Domain RMP. The assessment was updated in 2023 (APPENDIX III: 2023 Ashhurst Domain Landscape Character Assessment). This assessment highlights four distinct character areas:

- Open space amenity area
- Lower floodplain
- Native bush and
- Wetlands

Each of these character areas holds unique features and land uses that the RMP functions to preserve and enhance.

Key opportunities for improvement include:

- incorporating natural, built, and cultural heritage elements
- enhancing accessibility
- improving physical and visual connections within the Domain (including clear signage)

- restricting development in conservation areas like the native bush and wetlands to protect native vegetation and biodiversity
- enhancing pathways
- defining routes and key access points
- visual and physical integration with the surrounding landscape, such as the Manawatū and Pohangina Rivers.

The red line in Figure 2 shows the unusual boundary line between the City and Manawatū District. The boundary line shape and location on the left-hand aerial is due to the practice to have a boundary at a river – for practical considerations. As a river changes course, boundaries often get left behind. The historical map (right-hand map) clearly shows that the river course almost exactly followed the territorial authority boundary<sup>3</sup> in red, where the river would have been the boundary in times past. The map shows the close, if not somewhat exact, relationship between the Domain location and the Rangitāne Pā at Ashhurst Domain and how the old Pā site would have overlooked Gorge water traffic and anyone coming into the rohe from the Pohangina valley.



Figure 2: Otangaki Pā and Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain

<sup>3</sup> The red line in Figure 2 is the boundary between the Palmerston North City Council and the Manawatū District Council.



## Environmental changes and preservation of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain

The Lower Floodplain character area has experienced significant loss of land and forest area in more recent times due to changes in the river environment. The Manawatū River shifts and changes course significantly and quickly. Over the years both the Council and Regional Council have invested significantly along the river in the urban area to contain the awa to a narrow corridor.

This has had mixed success, and the Regional Council (along with Council and Rangitāne) are investigating how the flow capacity of river corridors in the district can be increased to reduce the impact of high flow events on communities and land along the length of the river. In the old map and aerial (Figure 2), it shows the river’s natural trajectory ran deep into what is now Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain’s lower terrace.

Protection of the lower terrace, from the impacts of future high flow events, will be an ongoing priority for this plan.



Figure 3: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain - Landscape Character Areas

## Ecological Assessment

An ecological assessment for Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain (Appendix Two) was carried out as part of the preparation of this Reserve Management Plan. The ecological assessment highlights its significant natural values and conservation potential, which are critical to developing management actions. The Domain features forest types which are rare in the region, such as totara/matai and swamp forest and supports nationally threatened species like swamp maire and mudfish. The oxbow wetland is highly ranked among regional wetlands. Figure 4 shows the ecological areas identified.

Pest management, particularly targeting possums, rats, and mustelids, is essential to protect these natural habitats. In recent times the reserve has experienced some damage caused by recreation activities not complimentary to the preservation and protection of the forest remnant, for example the public cutting trees to form tracks and disturbing soil to create bike jumps.

Recommendations from the Ecological Assessment include actions to better safeguard its high natural values, to ensure long-term ecological protection. They underscore the need for targeted conservation efforts, robust pest control measures, and controlled entry management policies to prioritise ecological preservation. The recommendations are given effect to in Section 3: Management Policies.



Figure 4: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain: Ecological Sites

## Rangitāne o Manawatū Cultural Assessment

The Cultural Values Assessment for Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain carried out as part of preparation for this plan, emphasises the need to recognise and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the area. To give effect to the assessment findings, the management plan should include actions that protect significant cultural sites such as Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain Pā, enhance interpretive signage to educate visitors about cultural heritage, and facilitate and prioritise iwi involvement in ongoing management and decision-making processes - particularly around urupā and wāhi tapu. Figure 5 shows the Wāhi Tapu/Urupā overlay recommended by the Cultural Values Assessment.

Restoration of natural features linked to cultural narratives, include those in close proximity to the Domain, like the old Pohangina River Oxbow and Parahaki Island. These cultural areas of interest could be worked into any signage and wayfinding plans for the reserve. Additionally, integrating cultural elements into new developments and recreational areas will ensure the cultural legacy is respected and celebrated, fostering a deeper connection between Te Ao Māori, the community and the land.

Management practices across this culturally significant site should also reflect the kaitiakitanga of mana whenua. Additionally, the Trustees of Parahaki Island must be engaged regarding any activities that may impact on the island.



Figure 5: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain Cultural Wāhi Tapu Overlay

# Legislative Framework

Management objectives align with the following:

- Reserves Act legislation – reserve classification,
- Resource Management Act – District Plan zoning

## Reserves Act Status

Recreation Reserve - Section 17 (2) of the Reserves Act 1977 requires that recreation reserves shall be administered under the appropriate provisions of the Act that:

(a) the public shall have freedom of entry and access to the reserve, subject to the specific powers conferred on the administering body by sections 53 and 54, to any bylaws under this Act applying to the reserve, and to such conditions and restrictions as the administering body considers to be necessary for the protection and general well-being of the reserve and for the protection and control of the public using it:

(b) where scenic, historic, archaeological, biological, geological, or other scientific features or indigenous flora or fauna or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or that flora or fauna or wildlife shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve:

provided that nothing in this subsection shall authorise the doing of anything with respect to fauna that would contravene any provision of the Wildlife Act 1953 or any regulations or Proclamation or notification under that Act, or the doing of anything with respect to archaeological features in any reserve that would contravene any provision of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014:

(c) those qualities of the reserve which contribute to the pleasantness, harmony, and cohesion of the natural environment and to the better use and enjoyment of the reserve shall be conserved:

(d) to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve, its value as a soil, water, and forest conservation area shall be maintained.

- While the Domain is classified under the Reserves Act as a Recreation Reserve, the management practices identified in the Ecological and Cultural recommendations of this Reserve Management Plan warrant a balance between recreation and preservation, with a shift more towards preservation of some areas consistent with 17(2)(b). This also aligns with the District Plan Conservation and Amenity Zone, and the Cultural Heritage Status given to urupā and wāhi tapu within this zone.

## District Plan Zones and Status

In addition to the Reserves Act classification, the District Plan zones and status within Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain guide development and management practices. The Resource Management Act, either through the District Plan or Horizons One Plan, may require consents for activities or works in this sensitive area.

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain is classified under two District Plan zones, and one status under the District Plan Section 17 Schedule of Objects and Sites of Cultural Heritage Value to Tangata Whenua (Figures 7 & 8).

### Recreation Zone

This zone includes areas designated for active and passive recreational activities. It encompasses the sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and other facilities that support public enjoyment and recreational use. The Recreation Zone is managed to facilitate a wide range of activities while maintaining the open, green spaces that are integral to the domain's character.

### Conservation and Amenity Zone

This zone focuses on the protection and enhancement of significant natural habitats and landscapes within the domain. It includes the native bush areas, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive regions. The Conservation and Amenity Zone is managed to conserve biodiversity, protect ecological values, and provide opportunities for passive recreation and nature appreciation. Activities in this zone are carefully controlled to minimise environmental impact and support conservation efforts.

At present the bush and urupa are contained within the Recreation rather than the Conservation and Amenity Zone. During the next review of the District plan, it will be important to review the District Plan zone boundaries for Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, to ensure they align with the ecological and cultural areas identified in this reserve management plan.

### Cultural Heritage Status

This status is dedicated to the recognition and preservation of areas with significant cultural and historical importance. This status is generally allocated to particular areas or buildings (and hence not a "zone" proper). It includes sites such as Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain Pā and other culturally significant landmarks. The Cultural Heritage Status is managed in collaboration with iwi and local communities to protect and enhance cultural heritage values, promote education and interpretation, and ensure that these areas are respected and celebrated.

Name	Issue / Feature
<b>Location / Legal Description</b>	
<b>Parahaki (or Moutere) Island</b> Manawatu River ML4046 and 338	An island in the river at the mouth of the Manawatu Gorge owned by Dannevirke based Rangitane families.
<b>Otangaki (Ashhurst Domain)</b> Ashhurst Domain near Manawatu River Pt Sec Town of Palmerston North	An old urupa in bush near the Manawatu River containing about 6 unmarked graves of Rangitane people drowned when their canoe sank in the river about 1850's or 1860's.

Figure 7: District Plan Cultural Heritage Value excerpt



Figure 8: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain: District Plan Zones

These zoning and scheduled sites of cultural heritage value help ensure that Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain's natural, recreational, and cultural values are protected and enhanced, facilitating a balanced approach to its management and development.

# Current use of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain

## Cultural practices and activities

The Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain hosts a wide variety of recreation activities, cultural practices, community events, play opportunities, volunteer groups and informal gatherings for families. The areas where major activities occur are shown in the map in Figure 9. Ensuring Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain maintains this breadth of diversity in a manner that is respectful, or mana-enhancing, is a key consideration in this management plan.

### Cultural practices

#### Kaitiakitanga

Rangitāne, supported by Council, maintain a partnership role as kaitiaki of this space regarding how resources are managed, developed and cared for in an ecological and spiritual sense, in perpetuity. In particular, Rangitāne maintain the role of caring for the Urupā at the Domain.

#### Noho Anga

Rangitāne practice noho anga – or the occupation of a space for the expression of spiritual and cultural practices. It is likely that this practice will grow, and these spaces can be identified over time.

### Activities

#### Camping

For those looking to extend their stay, Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain offers camping facilities. The campsite is well-maintained and provides essential amenities for a comfortable outdoor experience.

#### Cemetery and Urupā

The park is also used for visiting burial sites and graves. These sites have become areas of both historical and cultural significance over the years, as relatives and whanau to the deceased seek to understand and pay respect to the past.

#### Community Events

The Domain regularly hosts community events, including community planting days. These events foster community spirit and provide entertainment for locals and visitors alike.

#### Dog Exercise/Training

The Manawatū Canine Club has leased part of the Domain for dog training and breed showing since 1988. They have a clubhouse on site and hold regular obedience training and shows that attract a large number of entrants to the Domain, many who stay overnight. Their latest lease was signed in March 2020.

#### Environmental Education, Volunteers and Wildlife Observation

Educational programmes and guided tours focus on the unique flora and fauna of the area. These community-led initiatives aim to raise awareness about environmental conservation and the importance of preserving natural habitats. Often this is in conjunction with volunteers who commit their time to the care and preservation of the natural features.

#### Family, Picnicking and BBQs

The domain is equipped with numerous picnic tables and barbecue facilities, making it an ideal spot for family gatherings and social outings. Visitors can enjoy a meal amidst the natural beauty of the park.

#### Fitness Training/Gym

There have been mobile gyms located in the Domain, on and off, from 2019 to 2024. These have proven popular with locals.

#### Horse Riding

The Ashhurst Community has a strong horse riding, competing and trekking contingent. The Ashhurst Pohangina pony club lease part of the Domain and hold a number of rallies. The Domain, as well as other linking tracks will continue to allow for a variety of equine pursuits.

### Model Aircraft

Radio Controlled model aircraft are flown off a landing area along the lower terrace. The Ashhurst Model Fliers lease land for their club activities. The low impact nature of club activities makes them compatible with adjacent ecological areas.

### Playground/Children's Natural Play Area

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain features a dedicated children's playground and natural play area designed to engage young explorers with nature. This area includes various play structures and interactive elements crafted from natural materials, encouraging imaginative and adventurous play.

### Scouting

The Ashhurst Scouts have a community lease at Otangaki and have operated at this reserve for many years. They are planning to build a new scout hall.

### Sports and Active Recreation

Sports enthusiasts can take advantage of the open fields for football and cricket, and other recreational activities. The Domain is also popular for organised sports tournaments .

### Walking/dog walking/running

Ashhurst Domain-Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain offers a variety of walking and hiking trails that meander through its lush native forests and open parklands. These trails provide scenic views of the Manawātū River and surrounding landscapes, perfect for casual strolls or more vigorous hikes.



Figure 9: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain - current activities

## Facilities condition and renewal

The 2024 PNCC Parks Asset Management Plan has a description of all facilities and structures in the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, the condition and performance of the assets and the planned renewals programme. There is a mixture of facility ages and conditions across the Domain. Most facilities, including buildings are in good functional condition. The old Café (former Jockey Rooms) have fallen into a derelict state, and are no longer suitable for occupancy. A decision is needed on their future.

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# Opportunities and Challenges

A number of opportunities and challenges face the Domain, many of which are not new and not uncommon across regions. This plan makes provision to address these issues and how they relate to the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

1. Community group leasing (future provision, ongoing leases, special activities, volunteer groups, etc)
2. Cultural expression and rangatiratanga (urupā, camping and fires, expression, kaitiaki)
3. Future provision of overflow carparking
4. Growth in camping, and incidents of conflict between long-stay campers and other users
5. Integration of both Te Āpiti Masterplan and Te Ahu a Turanga
6. Managing commercial activities in a public space (food trucks, café, grazing leases)
7. Play and the natural environment
8. Preserving ecological treasures that are at risk of destruction and extinction
9. Provision for natural burial
10. River erosion on the lower terrace
11. Recreation use



A close-up photograph showing a person's hand planting a small green sapling into a hole in the soil. The sapling has several bright green, serrated leaves and a thin stem. The soil is dark brown and appears to be a mix of loam and organic matter. The background is filled with various green grasses and some dry, brown twigs, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows on the soil and the hand.

# Section 2

## Values and Objectives

# Partner, Stakeholder and Community Engagement - 2024

This 2024 update to the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain Reserve Management Plan marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to preserving and enhancing the Domain. This revision integrates extensive community engagement feedback collected from 2023 to early 2024, reflecting the diverse voices and aspirations of iwi, the wider Palmerston North public, local residents, and stakeholders.

Key insights from our Rangitāne partners, the community and stakeholders have highlighted the importance of maintaining the Domain's natural character, enhancing accessibility, protecting its ecological uniqueness, supporting diverse recreational activities, and fostering cultural expression and kaitiakitanga.



# Values

The values, identified through the engagement process, that guide and shape the management and development of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain unsurprisingly emerge from the unique identity of the Park. They are:

## Preservation

Protecting and restoring native ecological treasures, such as wetlands and bush, enhances the park's natural beauty, open views, and peaceful scenery, creating a sense of calm and relaxation for everyone who visits. These should be preserved for future generations.

## Enjoyment

The variety of activities that are complimentary to the natural and developed sections should be kept, and wherever possible integrated across the park. Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain is to be enjoyed respectfully.

## Connection

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain has a strong cultural and historical identity, that should be celebrated and respected. This kōrero should be woven into the fabric of the physical infrastructure and management practices, allowing people to better connect with the intrinsic depth of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

## Integration

The Te Āpiti Masterplan, the Manawatū River (through the River Framework) and Te Ahu a Turanga in particular, are three significant projects occurring in this area. Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain should be integrated into these developments as the pivotal centre.

By aligning the management and future opportunities with community values, kaitiakitanga and environmental stewardship, this plan aims to guide the sustainable development and management of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain for current and future generations. We are committed to a collaborative approach, partnering with Rangitāne, and involving local community groups and other stakeholders in the ongoing care and enhancement of this cherished natural reserve.

# Objectives

## Objective 1:

To **acknowledge Rangitāne ancestral occupation of Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain** through the iwi's ongoing presence in decision-making, management and participation at the reserve.

## Objective 2:

To **foster enjoyment and involvement** in the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain by a variety of users and interests in a manner that is mana-enhancing and respectful of the core values.

## Objective 3:

To protect, **preserve and restore the natural environment and character** of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, in a manner consistent with the aspirations of local residents and the wider public.

## Objective 4:

To encourage **resilience through integrated management** and development practices at the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

## Objective 5:

To provide opportunities for appropriate **community and commercial activities** that would enhance the natural character and enjoyment of the Domain.

## Objective 6:

To encourage the use of the Domain as an **educational resource**.

## Objective 7:

To adjust to **changing recreation and sporting pursuits**

# Section 3

## Management Policies



# Landscape and Character Policy Areas



Landuses

## Key: Landuses

- |                                  |                                     |                          |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Grazed Paddocks               | 9. Managers House                   | 16. Cemetery             |
| 2. Manawatū Canine Club          | 10. Service / Maintenance / Storage | 17. Wetland              |
| 3. Manawatū Pony Club            | 11. Children's Playground           | 18. Escarpment           |
| 4. Regenerating Native Bush      | 12. Picnic Lawn                     | 19. Former Café          |
| 5. Soccer Fields                 | 13. Toilets and Shelter             | 20. Lower Floodplain     |
| 6. Cricket Oval                  | 14. Ashhurst Bush                   | 21. Changing Rooms       |
| 7. Main Entrance                 | 15. Camping Ground                  | 22. Model Aeroplane Club |
| 8. Office / Information Building |                                     |                          |

Figure 10: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain Landscape Use Areas

# Management and Administration

Palmerston North City Council is the Administering Body of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain. The primary purpose of the Administering Body is to manage the reserve in accordance with the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977.

The purpose of the Act is to ensure that parks and reserves are properly maintained and managed for the use and enjoyment of the community. Council has chosen to work alongside iwi to ensure that the management of the reserve reflects the ongoing partnership and identity of two peoples. The General Policy provides more detail on our partnership.



# Policy 1

## Partnership (Rangitāne o Manawatū) and Management

The history and development of this site, as occupied by Rangitāne (for hundreds of years), would be incomplete without mention of Rangitāne history and practices at the site. The Domain, as an old Pā site, remained occupied as a gathering place long after the Marae was gone. Rangitāne have acted as kaitiaki over this place up until the present day.

Policy 1.1: To involve Rangitāne, exercising their rangatira, in the activities at Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain that they believe require cultural input at the earliest stage possible.

Policy Action 1.1.1: Develop protective measures around urupā in the Domain. (section 3.2.1).

Policy Action 1.1.2 : Disturbance of the ground off the path in in red area (urupā) in Figure 5, will not occur until a Rangitāne representative has been to the site and appropriate tikanga has been completed

Policy Action 1.1.3: Council and Rangitāne will engage with one another before making any decision to undertake significant pruning of bush within the urupā area

Policy Action 1.1.4: develop bilingual signage for the urupā area communicating the its significance to iwi and rules around environmental protection and wāhi tapu.

Policy Action 1.1.5: Any activity occurring in, or planned for, the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain that may impact Parahaki Island will be raised early in the planning process with the Island Trust.

Policy 1.2: Rangitāne will be invited to complete, or be part of, inductions for domain staff and community volunteer days in the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

Policy 1.3: Enable noho anga – the right of an indigenous culture to occupy a space for ritual or ceremonial purposes. This will include lighting fires for breaking tapu and remaining on site overnight.

Policy Action 1.3.1: Develop a process with to Rangitāne to manage bookings for noho anga.

Policy 1.4: Use both the original and new name for the reserve and surrounding area: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

Policy Action 1.4.1: Progressively update all Council references to Ashhurst Domain, to the dual name Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, on the website, signage and PNCC materials.

# Policy 2

## Landscape

The updated Landscape Assessment 2023 identified four key character areas, separated by distinctive character features that make them unique:

1. Open space
2. Lower Floodplain
3. Amenity Area
4. Native Bush and Wetlands.

The four character areas are shown in Figure 3. Within the four Character Areas there are many activities and practices that require day-to-day management.

Visual management remains a key feature of this management plan. Whenever any form of development or landscape change is proposed, the change or development must be consistent with the character assessment of the area in which it is proposed. In addition, any development or change within an area must also consider its neighbouring character area – should it impinge upon the visual amenity of that site and its character values.

Policy 2.1: Protect and enhance the unique landscapes and visual amenity.

Policy Action 2.1.1: Continue to work with horizons and Rangitāne to mitigate the impacts of high river flows on Character Area 2 (lower floodplain)

Policy Action 2.1.2: Produce Visual Amenity and Character Development Guidelines. (The Landscape assessment will provide the material for the guidelines).

Policy Action 2.1.3: Manage plant height for open views and create viewing areas (with associated seating and interpretation signage)

# Policy 3

## Vegetation, Fauna and Wetland

The Domain has a number of vegetation areas including a native swamp forest and wetland area of some significance. The Domain vegetation below the Terrace can be described as Floodplain forest (made up of totara/matai stand and swamp forest), terrace forest, oxbow wetland and northern foremost remnant (Landscape area 4, Figure 3).

The Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain vegetation is also made up of escarpment vegetation, shelter belts and general amenity planting. Lower Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, as a floodplain forest, features regionally rare forest types such as totara/matai, and supports nationally threatened species like swamp maire and mudfish. The oxbow wetland is highly ranked among regional wetlands.

Policy 3.1: Manage and maintain the vegetation, fauna and native species to enhance the natural character areas, public safety, forest and tree health and to facilitate opportunities for ecological habitats to thrive.

Policy Actions 3.1.1: Allow native trees in bush areas that are dead or dying to naturally rot and replenish the forest floor, unless they pose a danger to users.

Policy Action 3.1.2: Other than in bush areas, remove trees that are dead/dying, seriously damaged or dangerous, and replace with suitable species.

Policy Actions 3.1.3: Control plant pests in a manner consistent with the Character Areas and Horizons Regional Plant Pest Management Plan.

### Character Zone 4: Bush Remnant and Wetland

Policy 3.2: ensure that management practices in Character Area 4 protect and strengthen the rare and unique species in the floodplain swamp forest and wetland – Scenic Reserve A (includes all native species).

Policy Action: 3.2.1: Make rules for the area and install signage in Character Area 4 advising the public of rules, including:

- Walking and experiencing nature is limited to the official approved paths.
- Mountain bikes, bike and scooters are not allowed on paths or in the bush
- Off path activities in Character Area 4 require prior approval of Council
- This is a dog on-leash area under the Dog Control Bylaw 2024

Policy Action 3.2.2: only use ecologically and genetically appropriate plant stock in future plantings within and adjacent to the indigenous forest.

Policy Action: 3.2.3: seek funding to undertake a full pest, weed and exotic fauna stocktake of Character Area 4 and develop a pest control and fauna management plan.

Policy Action: 3.2.4: support volunteer efforts to identify canopy gaps within the bush and reinstate canopy by controlling weeds in these localised areas

Policy Action: 3.2.5: include Character Area 4 within the City's biodiversity management and reporting initiatives

Policy Action 3.2.6: support volunteer groups to help carry out actions 3.2.2-3.2.5 and any other activity consistent with Policy 3.2.

Policy Action 3.2.7: Develop and deliver a communications plan for the actions in Policy 3.2.

Policy 3.3: Continue to support education and learning opportunities (particularly Character Area 4).

Policy 3.4: Protect the existing wetland and make provision for the extension of the natural bush remnant and wetland area to create a larger, and thereby more naturally stable ecological preservation area. (Development Opportunity 3.2.8).

Policy Action: 3.4.1: Ensure grazed land remains physically separated from the wetland.

Development Opportunity - Policy Opportunity 3.5: Develop Character Area 2 (Floodplain) to become Part of Character Area 4 as native wetland and bush.



# Policy 4

## Recreation

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain provides for a wide range of recreation activities that are consistent with its character and history. There are open spaces, sports fields, bushwalks and playgrounds. Horse riding and dog training and shows also feature at the Domain. Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain also acts as the main reserve for Ashhurst residents. Council will continue to support this diversity of activity.

Policy 4.1: Provide and manage a variety of spaces and assets that will cater to the diverse recreation activity. This will include but is not limited to:

- Casual unstructured recreation
- Play
- Sporting days, training and events
- Organised sports competitions
- Clubs and community leases/activities

Policy Action 4.1.1: Maintain facilities and grounds in accordance with the service standards in the PNCC Parks and Property Asset Management Plans.

Policy Action 4.1.2: Require all organised sports games, trainings and one-off events to be booked through Council.

Policy 4.2: Ensure compatibility of recreation activities with Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain character; and encourage user conflict to be resolved through an etiquette of mutual respect – as per Manawatū River Shared Path.

Policy Action 4.2.1: Update the wording on signage to align with Policy 4.2, when existing signs are renewed.

Policy 4.3: Limit recreation activities to areas where they are not detrimental to the Character identity.

Policy Action 4.3.1: Identify any existing recreation activities within a Character area that are not compatible with the character identity and explore opportunities to restrict them or accommodate them in other areas that are more suitable.

# Policy 5

## Events

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain is popular for formal and informal events. Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain hosts a wide variety of events – with some at a large scale. Certain events may negatively impact on the landscape character in some areas, and other areas are so popular that events may negatively impact on the enjoyment of others.

Policy 5.1: Allow for a variety of one-off events which meet the provisions of Council bylaws, policies and the District Plan.

Policy Action 5.1.1: Continue to require large events and bookings for exclusive use of grounds and facilities to be booked through Council.

Policy Action 5.1.2: Encourage the community to book private events with Council, even if exclusive usage is not required, so that booking conflicts can be managed.

# Policy 6

## Camping

The Campground has a very distinctive “off the beaten track” appeal. Campground numbers have been steadily increasing for many years, and the campground is now a very popular alternative to the “highway 1” tourist appeal. There has been an increase in incidents of threatening behaviour towards staff and other users with most incidents involving longer-stay campers with no other place to live. There have also been incidents of people sleeping in the bush or vehicles within the carparks. It is important going forward that basic extensions to facilities occur and that the management of the campground is sufficiently resourced to ensure each camper has a good camping experience.

Policy 6.1: Continue to provide regional “off-the-beaten-track” camping and overnight stay facilities in the Domain.

Policy Action 6.1.1: Limit overnight camping in the Domain to the campground and/or as part of a one-off event in a community lease area e.g. canine centre.

Policy Action 6.1.2: Continue to restrict the length of stay to prevent long-term occupancy.

Policy Action 6.1.3: Continue to monitor and report on camper numbers and survey guests.

Policy Action 6.1.4: Review and adapt campground rules to support an “off the beaten track” camping experience and manage camper behaviour.

Policy 6.2: Provide for continued growth in campground visitor numbers.

Policy Action 6.2.1: Monitor the use of powered sites and provide for the installation of additional power boxes if demand frequently exceeds supply.

Policy Action 6.2.2: Decommission the old dump station site to enable the area to return to camping provision.

Policy Action 6.2.3: Investigate options, including a commercial partnership, to increase the level of management and facilities provided at the campground, to better meet camper needs, without impacting on management of the wider Domain or campground viability.

# Policy 7

## Amenity Area

The playground and surrounding amenity at Ashhurst are well-loved by kids and adults alike. It is important that everything is well-maintained and cared for in this area. The playground must meet playground safety standards, and the public amenities and the barbecues looked after in accordance with the Parks Asset Management Plan.

Policy 7.1: Maintain the playground to the appropriate safety standard, and ensure all seats, tables, barbecues and toilet/change facilities are maintained in working condition.

Policy Action 7.1.1: Continue to undertake regular playground safety audits and maintenance checks to ensure equipment meets the most appropriate standard for its type.

Policy Action 7.1.2: Maintain facilities and grounds in accordance with the service standards in Councils Parks and Property Asset Management Plans.

Development Opportunity: Policy 7.2: Incorporate further natural play features into the Domain without impinging upon Character Area 4.

Opportunity Action 7.2.1: Identify opportunities to create natural play elements in and around the existing play area.

# Policy 8

## Burial Sites

### **Cemetery**

The Ashhurst Cemetery is of significance to the local community, it celebrates the lives of past residents, many of whose descendants still live in the village. The cemetery is maintained to a high standard and is managed in accordance with the PNCC Cemeteries and Crematorium Bylaw. Capacity remains in the lawn area for several burials and ash interments, and to build additional niche walls to accommodate ash interments.

Policy 8.1: To limit the impact of the cemetery on the campground and adjacent overflow parking area, there will be no expansion of the area set aside for the existing cemetery.

Policy 8.2: Maintain cemetery assets in accordance with the service standards in the PNCC Parks Asset Management Plan.

### **Natural Burials**

Natural burial involves a non-embalmed body buried at a shallow depth to facilitate natural decomposition. Natural burial is becoming more popular and it has been challenging to find publicly owned land in the city suitable to be set aside for natural burial. Members of the community, in consultation with Rangitāne have identified an area within the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain which may be suitable for natural burial. The intention would be to restore the area in native bush, as part of the natural burial process, which is consistent with the plans for the surrounding area.

Policy 8.3: Make provision for natural burial within Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

Policy Action 8.3.1: Investigate the suitability of the soil within the area adjacent to the Northern Bush Remnant portion of the wetland for natural burial. (blue circled area in Figure 11).

Policy Action 8.4.2: Subject to the confirmation of site suitability, and in partnership with Rangitāne, support the community to develop a proposal for the designation, development and operation of a natural burial site.

# Policy 9

## Carparking, Overflow Parking and Access

Managing the flow and circulation of transport and recreation activities in and around the reserve is a key planning requirement for a successful use of space. This includes the way by which users enter the park. Managing the balance between carparks and the character of the Domain is a challenge, but one that needs to be met in an appropriate manner.

Car parking is essential for many people to get to the park and enjoy it, particularly as Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain is a destination reserve serving the wider city. Carpark locations should be strategic and focused in particular areas. The provision of new parking should consider visual impact, amenity proximity and protection of character areas.

Policy 9.1 Access: provide an efficient and safe access network within the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain catering for a wide range of recreation visitors.

Policy Action 9.1.1: receive feedback on the functioning of the main entrance to the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain once Te Ahu a Turanga is complete.

Policy Action 9.1.2: Review the Domain roading network for efficiency, appropriateness in regards to Character Type, safety and aesthetic enjoyment when planning for any future developments in the reserve.

Policy 9.2: Continue to control the speed, and direction of traffic within the reserve.

Policy 9.3: Provide safe, convenient parking spaces at a level compatible with the capacity of the reserve.

Policy Action 9.3.1: Continue to provide for overflow carparking in the areas identified in Figure 9, rather than building carparks to meet peak demand.

Policy Action 9.3.2: Review the level of provision, location and condition of carparks as part of the 3-yearly asset management planning cycle.

# Policy 10

## Signage, interpretation and education

Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain is a valuable educational resource, offering a unique window into native river swamp habitats of the past and geological formation. Clear signage which helps users navigate between features and provides key information in a consistent manner, whilst minimising the impact on the aesthetics of the surrounding environment is important. The Domain is in a pivotal gateway and careful consideration will be required to integrate Domain signage with Te Āpiti, Te Ahu a Turanga and the Manawatū River.

Policy 10.1: Promote Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain as a valuable natural and educational resource.

Policy Action 10.1.1: Ensure information on the Council website and promotional material is kept up to date.

Policy Action: 10.1.2: Enable school groups to participate in the care and restoration of Area 4.

Policy Action 10.1.3: Seek funding to develop interpretation signage and pamphlets for Character Area 4.

Policy 10.2: Provide wayfinding signage that is easy to follow and appropriate for the nature of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

Policy Action 10.2.1: Continue to utilise the hierarchy of signage, wayfinding marker and standardised symbols to simplify navigation for visitors whilst also minimising the impact of signs on the surrounding landscape.

Policy Action 10.2.2: Ensure that all signage is developed and/or renewed in accordance with Council's brand and signage policies, including the use of Te Reo Māori.

Policy Action 10.2.3: Engage with Rangitāne on the content and translation of all interpretive signage to ensure it's culturally functional and appropriate.

Policy Action 10.2.4: Work with the Manawatū Gorge Governance Group and Rangitāne to develop alignment between signage on the outer areas of the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain and other signage in the area.

# Policy 11

## Buildings, Site Furniture and Facilities

There are a number of facilities across the Domain that serve the needs of the park staff and users. Some are used exclusively by Council staff; some are open to the public, and some are owned and managed by community groups. The old Jockey Rooms, which were redeveloped for use as a café have now fallen into disrepair. All other buildings in the Domain are being maintained in sound functional condition.

Policy 11.1: Maintain Council owned buildings in sound functional condition and renew in accordance with the provisions of the Property Asset Management Plan.

Policy 11.2: Dispose of the old jockey rooms (café) in the most cost-effective manner.

Policy 11.3: Review proposals for new buildings to ensure the location and design is sensitive to the surrounding environment.

Policy 11.4: Continue to install and replace furniture in a style that is appropriate to the Character area with a preference for the use of natural materials.

# Policy 12

## Leases and Licenses

### Community Leases

Council holds leases with community groups in the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain that provide beneficial and cost-effective activities for the community. These groups are made up of volunteers and operate as for-purpose (not-for-profit) organisations that do not charge commercial rates. This makes these activities more affordable. All community group leases are directed by Council Policy for the Use of Public Space and the Support and Funding Policy. Community Group leases are also subject to the provisions of the Reserves Act.

There are three community leases and one community agreement in Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain at the time of writing. These leases are listed within Appendix I. There is nothing elsewhere in this plan that would require a current lease holder to move or cease their activities e.g. Ashhurst Model Fliers Club will be maintained and incorporated into plans for future ecological restoration in the lower terrace floodplain.

Policy 12.1: Council will consider the renewal of existing community group leases within Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain, without first consulting with the public, providing the proposed activity and lease area is substantially the same as in the current lease provisions.

Policy Action 12.1.1. Contact community groups before the end of their lease to discuss any changes to occupancy proposed.

Policy Action 12.1.2. Incorporate new leases to Appendix I.

Policy 12.2: Ensure that lease holders fulfil their leasing obligations under their lease and the Reserves Act 1977.

Development Opportunity Policy 12.3: set aside a portion of land that is currently grazed for future community-led initiatives which are consistent with the principles and objectives of this Reserve Management Plan. See Figure 11.

### Commercial Leases and Licences

Commercial lease and licences are appropriate in reserves to support the activities occurring in the reserves. All revenue from commercial leases is used to offset the costs associated with managing and maintaining the wider reserve. There are currently no commercial leases in the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain other than grazing leases.

Grazing leases have been used for many years to manage land that is set aside for future reserve space, but not currently required. The two most significant areas that are covered by a grazing lease at present are described as number 5 in Figure 9.

These two areas leased for grazing are proposed as suitable for community initiatives and the wetland forest restoration project. It is intended to progressively reduce the area available for grazing to enable development.

Policy 12.4 Issue licences to mobile vendors (food trucks) to whose products meet demand for the sale of food and drinks in Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain.

Policy Action 12.4.1: Assess applications for food truck and other vendor licences against the objectives of this Reserve Management Plan and issue licences in accordance with Council policy.

Policy 12.5: Continue to use grazing leases for the management of land until it is needed for reserve purposes.

Policy Action 12.5.1: At the end of the grazing lease term, review the grazing area, and issue new grazing leases for terms no greater than 2 years and for an area that does not impact on proposed community initiatives and reserve developments.

Policy Action 12.5.2: Maintain land removed from grazing until development commences, so it does not pose a fire hazard.

# Section 4

## Development and Integration Opportunities



This Reserve Management Plan review is timely, coinciding with the development of Te Ahu a Turanga (Manawatū/Tararua) highway, the adoption of the Te Āpiti Masterplan, and the move by Council to secure the Ashhurst to Palmerston North shared path – thereby linking the City to Ashhurst via off-road recreation/commuter options.

The plan outlines strategies to integrate the Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain into all three large-scale pieces of work, thereby enhancing accessibility and recreation opportunities while preserving its natural and cultural values.

Integration Policy 13.1: Integrate the appropriate paths and wayfinding with new developments. See Policy 10.2.4

Development Policy 13.2: Develop the Lower Terrace as an ecological restoration area expanding the existing bush remnant and wetland. See Policy 3.2 for details; and Figure 10: 14 for aerial description.

Development Policy 13.3: Provide an area for future community leasing opportunities. See Leases and Licences Policy 12.5; and Figure 10: 13 for aerial description.

Development Opportunity 13.4: Be open to new proposals for food and beverage services adjacent to the playground in the summer months to support an increase in day visitors and campers.



Figure 11: Otangaki-Ashhurst Domain – proposed future activities

# Appendices





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COME**







**Te Kaunihera o Papaioea**  
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